

Mayor's column for
The Beacon & The Enterprise
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Some random thoughts as we roll into 2008.

About the Washington State Ferries...

How ridiculous of some of our state legislators to call for "heads to roll" because of the retirement of the steel electric ferries. The WSF staff has gone to the legislature many times to explain the problems of an aging fleet. Shame on the legislature for not taking previous action.

And while we're at it, taking money from capital projects to build new boats is only robbing Peter to pay Paul. Building new boats won't do any good if we don't have docks at which to land the boats.

The ferry system is in trouble on land and at sea, and both fixes are costly. If we are going to continue to operate this mode of transportation, then the legislature better fix it soon.

About our roads—crowded and full of potholes...

The exact same problem faces us with our State highways. The condition of our roads is worse than the ferry problem. The only reason no one makes a spectacle of it is that roads, unlike ferries, won't sink and take lives along with it. Yet the problem is real nonetheless. Again, the legislature needs to find solutions, even painful ones, without continuing to ask the voters to approve their thinking. We elect them to solve problems, not to throw their hands up in the air and toss it back at us.

About the demand for our tax dollars...

2008 may see the Edmonds School District ask for more money. And Stevens Hospital may ask for more money. And the City of Edmonds may ask to renew the emergency medical services levy. And let's not forget that the City is currently negotiating with its four labor unions on three-year contracts. I'm pretty sure that the bargaining units will ask for more.

Everyone wants more, needs more, and yet there is only so much money to go around. Where will it end?

About the future of cities in Washington State...

By 2009, ten years after Tim Eyman and his anti-tax initiatives burst upon the scene, cities in the state will be facing the severe consequences of the drop in tax revenue from the state. There is no question that cities have become leaner and more efficient as a result of the loss in revenues. That's the good news. The bad news is that inflation has continued to increase, all city services cost more, and property taxes don't cover the cost of doing business.

The solutions are limited. Costs cannot be reduced without cutting key services. Revenues cannot be increased without people voting to raise their taxes. The day of reckoning is edging ever closer.

About the future of Edmonds...

In 2008 I will present to the City Council the results of my year-long look at the future of Edmonds and how we will do business in the future. Ideally the Council will complete a visioning process of their own to determine their (your) priorities before we get to the 2009-10 budget preparations. Blending the two studies will determine how we will operate as a city in the years ahead.

About building heights in downtown Edmonds...Just seeing if you were still paying attention!

I look forward to 2008 and all it will bring. Happy New Year!